

remember another thing I said, you just remember this: No country throws away its common values and common humanity, even for an instant, without paying a price. And every night—every night—I thank God that we have the chance to be a force for peace from Northern Ireland to the Middle East to Kosovo to Africa. I ask for the opportunity every night to make one stab to work out the problems between Greece and Turkey on Cyprus, to try to bring India and Pakistan closer together. And I thank God every night that we have not been cut apart by those things.

But America is growing more and more diverse. One of our new Governors here, Governor Davis, while he is Governor—while he is Governor—may preside over a State that has no majority race. Now, this is a good thing in the world of the 21st century if—but only if—America not only preaches our doctrine to people abroad but lives by it at home. The Democratic Party in the 1990's has constantly been for opportunity, for change, and for community.

I like to joke that at the end of the 20th century, looking back on over 200 years of American history, our party leaves this century and enters the next as not only the party of Jefferson and Jackson and Franklin Roosevelt but also now the party of Abraham Lincoln and Theodore Roosevelt. And I am very proud of it. I want you to stay proud of it. And I want us to live by it.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 8:58 p.m. at the National Building Museum. In his remarks, he referred to Governors Frank O'Bannon of Indiana, DGA chair, Paul E. Patton of Kentucky, DGA vice chair, Tom Carper of Delaware, Gray Davis of California; former Governors John Waihee of Hawaii, Bob Miller of Nevada, Evan Bayh of Indiana, and Roy Romer of Colorado, general chair, Democratic National Committee; Katie Whelan, executive director, Jennifer Rokala, national finance director, and Mark Weiner, treasurer, Democratic Governors' Association; Mayor Dennis W. Archer of Detroit, MI; Joseph J. Andrew, national chair-designate, and Donald L. Fowler, former national chair, Democratic National Committee; and media consultant Frank Greer.

## Remarks Prior to a Meeting With Congressional Leaders and an Exchange With Reporters

February 23, 1999

### Kosovo Peace Talks

**The President.** I'd like to make a very brief statement, and then we'll take a couple of questions. And as you know, you'll get to ask the leaders questions after the meeting, and we've got a lot of work to do.

But I think it's important to—first of all, I want to say how pleased I am to have the whole leadership here, how much I appreciate their coming down. We've got a lot to discuss, and I'm looking forward to it. I'd like to make just a couple of comments about the peace talks at Rambouillet on Kosovo. They made a lot of progress; they've got about a 40-page document, which describes in greater detail than ever before what the nature of an autonomous Kosovo within Serbia would be like. And that's the good news.

There are still some important disagreements. The Serbs have still not agreed to a NATO-led multinational force to try to maintain the peace over a 3-year period. The Kosovars still want some sort of assurance of a referendum at the end of the 3-year period, and neither side will agree to the other's position on that. And so we're working through that today, hoping for a resolution.

I talked to Secretary Albright last night. Whatever happens today and however they agree to proceed, I think it's very important that the Serbs exercise restraint on the ground and that the Kosovars respond in kind. They've made a lot of progress, and they don't need to let this thing get away from them. And we'll keep watching it, and I expect there will be more news on it as the day breaks.

**Q.** Will you extend the deadline again, sir, is that it?

**The President.** No, I don't know. That's up to the parties. I hope that they'll be able to resolve what they're going to do today. I think there will be some sort of resolution about where to go from here today, and we'll just have to see.

**Q.** But no bombings?

**The President.** Well, whether NATO bombs or not, the Secretary General has the

authority in his pocket now. That depends upon the actions of the Serbs. And what we need is continued restraint. But as I said, they made a lot of progress; they had these two big differences, each side having one condition the other won't agree to. So we'll just have to see where we go today.

**Q.** Mr. President, Senator Lott expressed concern about a costly, open-ended, no-defined peace-keeping mission. What kind of reassurances can you give him on that point?

**The President.** Well, I think that what we learned in Bosnia was that we shouldn't set a date certain and later find out we can't meet it and have people feel that they've been misled. I don't want to do that. So I think the important thing to do is to have an exit strategy based on benchmarks, on developments. And then if the Congress agrees with the benchmarks, that those are reasonable standards, then I think we can have an open relationship that has some credibility in the agreements between the Congress and the executive branch.

In terms of paying for it, I think in this fiscal year, whatever we have to do, we would need emergency funding because we're in a fiscal year where the Defense budget is already set. In the years ahead, I would expect that we would have to work that into the budget, and I think that's what the Congress leaders—Congress, as far as I know in both parties—have expected us to do, because they don't want the Pentagon to have to absorb these costs away from readiness and taking care of our people in the military.

### **Cooperation With Republicans**

**Q.** Mr. President, these Republican leaders all voted to oust you from office. How can you work with them?

**The President.** We all took an oath, and I think we intend to follow it. We owe it to the American people, and I'm looking forward to it.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:15 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, the President referred to NATO Secretary General Javier Solana. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

### **Remarks on the "Insure Kids Now" Initiative**

*February 23, 1999*

**The President.** Thank you very much. Let me begin by saying how very much I appreciate all of you here who are a part of this historic day. I thank my longtime friend Governor Carper for his generous remarks and his great stories. He almost broke my concentration, though. I'll spend the rest of the day trying to remember what my first answer was to whether there was a noise when a tree falls in the forest. *[Laughter]*

I thank you, Governor Leavitt, for your outstanding leadership and your concern for our children. I'd like to, again, acknowledge the presence of Governor Angus King of Maine and Mary Herman; Governor and Mrs. Knowles of Alaska; Governor Vilsack of Iowa; Mrs. Rosselló from Puerto Rico; Mrs. Underwood from West Virginia. And I thank all the members of the Governors' conference who are here.

There's one private citizen here I would like to acknowledge, and that is Bud Chiles, the son of the late Governor Lawton Chiles of Florida, who has been very active in this endeavor, as well. I thank him.

We have a distinguished bipartisan delegation from the United States Congress here: Senator Hatch, here supporting his Governor from Utah; Senator Specter from Pennsylvania; Congresswoman Diana DeGette from Colorado; Congresswoman Anna Eshoo from northern California; Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Texas; Congressman Bart Stupak from the upper peninsula of Michigan. He is the only person in the room who thinks it is warm outside today. *[Laughter]*

I'd also like to thank the Smith family for coming, and I hope the boys weren't too embarrassed to stand up. They look very healthy to me, and that's reassuring. *[Laughter]* And I'd like to thank these beautiful children for being here—over here, and their families. When you think about what this is all about, just kind of look over there.

I want to thank the National Governors' Association. I want to thank Secretary Shalala, who is indefatigable. If I ask her to do something, sooner or later I will come to regret it—*[laughter]*—because she will do